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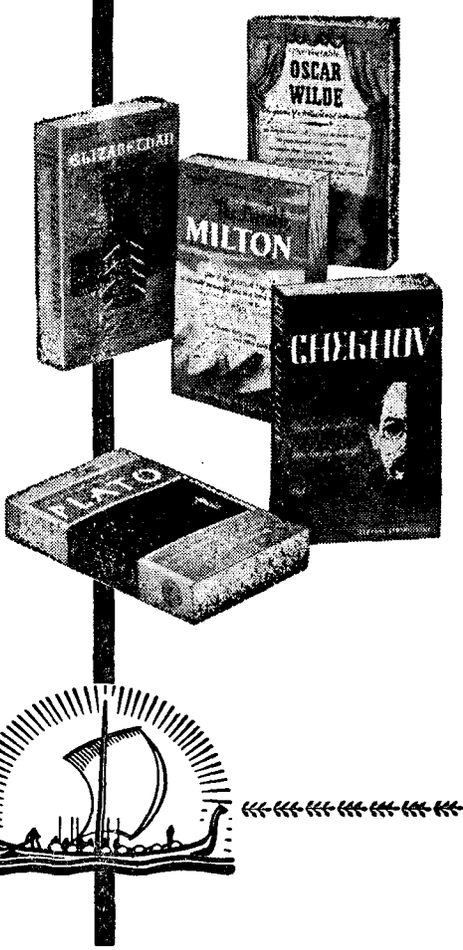

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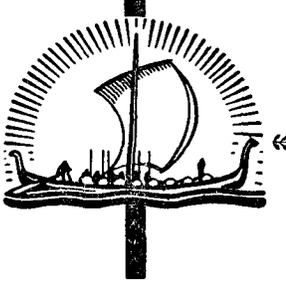

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THE
Commonweal
A Weekly Review of Public Affairs, Literature, and the Arts
THIRTY-THIRD YEAR OF PUBLICATION

week by week

CATHOLICS IN THE UNIVERSITY

THE TROUBLED relations which exist between Princeton University and Father Hugh Halton, O.P., the Catholic chaplain, raise questions of deep importance. The initial questions, which The Commonweal first considered in the issue of October 11, concern the local situation only, for it is not typical of relations which exist between most secular universities and the chaplains who are assigned to them. The further questions have broader import, for they concern nothing less than the role of the Catholic in the intellectual life of America.

Any Catholic who attends or teaches at a secular university must expect to encounter ideas and beliefs that are at variance with or actively opposed to his own. A Catholic chaplain has, of course, the great responsibility of seeing that the Catholic students under his care receive due guidance. And he is usually able to offer this guidance in the atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding proper to a university.

In a recent issue of the *New World*, Chicago's diocesan paper, Father Cornelius McGillicuddy, the chaplain of the Sheil Club of Northwestern University, wrote, apropos of the Princeton affair: "Most Newman Club chaplains, although not endorsing all ideas presented at a secular university, nevertheless find a spirit of cooperation and good will which enables them freely to serve the Catholic students and to present the truths of the Church."

Father Halton, though not a Newman Club chaplain, was assigned to a university where, for almost twenty-five years, that "spirit of cooperation and good will" had been shown toward his predecessor. He worked hard to improve the facilities for Catholic students at Princeton and was zealous in their behalf. But in his zeal he made statements and charges that were irresponsible and unrestrained. He was, in return, abused in several letters to the undergraduate *Daily Princetonian*. Through a misunderstanding which in no way involved Father Halton, a town newspaper leveled a charge —which it later retracted—that he had violated the seal of the confessional. We do not regard lightly such excesses nor do we join forces with those who are hostile to Catholicism when we reiterate our criticism of Father Halton's behavior.

Father Halton charged, we reported, that some Princeton members of the American Association of University Professors were atheists. That this is true in a secular university should not be surprising. To regard "atheist" as a condemnatory epithet rather than the descriptive term it is in such a context is hardly reasonable. To say, as Father Halton did, that "the teachings of some professors at Princeton are doing more harm than all the writings of Karl Marx taken together" may be dramatically effective; the statement can scarcely commend itself to a community which would like conclusions to be based upon ascertainable evidence. We previously mentioned Father Halton's charge—made to explain his refusal to allow Jacques Maritain to speak in the Aquinas Foundation—that "Dr. Maritain does not have a very sound philosophical background," not to defend M. Maritain, who needs no defense from us, but to reveal the intellectual level of the charges Father Halton made.

FATHER HALTON has, however, given The Commonweal some reason to defend itself. In an interview with the New York *Journal American*, he said, "How many Catholics work for it [The Commonweal] is a question, but it certainly has no connection with the clergy and no right to claim

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an official Catholic position." If the number of Catholics who work for the magazine is a question, it is one which is easily answered. All editors of the magazine, who alone determine policy, are Catholics. At no time in the history of the magazine has it been otherwise. In that it is owned and controlled by Catholic laymen the magazine has no official connection with the clergy, but it numbers among its distinguished contributors Religious, priests and bishops.

The magazine has never, of course, claimed that it was "official." It is Catholic in the sense that it is a member of the Catholic Press Association and that its editors, as Catholics, attempt to assess temporal events against the background of eternal values provided by their faith. It has developed and explained this position in its editorials, frequently and fully.

Father Halton also referred to The Commonweal in connection with an invitation to speak which the undergraduate students extended to Alger Hiss last year. Father Halton, who openly opposed the move and attacked the trustees of Princeton in an advertisement in the student newspaper, said that "I was blasted only by the Communist *Daily Worker* and Commonweal magazine."

This statement does a disservice to the truth on at least three counts. First, in the editorial on Alger Hiss we neither referred nor alluded to Father Halton or his opinions. We did say that "any possible danger involved in Mr. Hiss' brief appearance at Princeton would appear to be considerably less than that which could result if the University were to yield to outside pressure and countermand the student invitation." The pressure we had in mind was being exerted by various veterans' groups outside the University. Second, several highly respected papers and journals took the same position as did The Commonweal, which, contrary to Father Halton, was not that expressed in the Communist *Worker*. Third, and most important, to bracket the *Daily Worker* and The Commonweal is to insinuate falsely. It is no more sensible than was Lord Cherwell when he implied recently that Pope Pius had been duped by the Communists because of his statements concerning nuclear testing.

These modes of conducting argument do not, we submit, excite admiration. In an intellectual community such as Princeton, epithet is not regarded as a proper mode of persuasion, nor does unfounded insinuation suggest a regard for the truth. By attempting to substitute for rational discussion the authority and prestige which are legitimately his as chaplain, Father Halton has dissipated the "spirit of cooperation and goodwill" which must prevail between chaplain and university. He has also, however inadvertantly, done the service of posing sharply a question of increasing significance in America, the role of Catholics in the nation's intellectual life.

COMPETITIVE COEXISTENCE

KHRUSHCHEV uttered many a challenge to the West in his recent interview with James Reston of the N.Y. *Times*. Overall, it was a startling amalgam of sense and fancy. His likening of Chancellor Adenauer to Adolf Hitler, his accusation of an American attempt to get the Turks to invade Syria and his flat assertion that "Communist ideology is the most humane ideology in the whole world" betray the lengths to which he would strain credulity. In the same category is his picture of a future in which the Marxist-Leninist State has withered away in a truly orthodox fashion, while the Russian masses at long last give themselves over to the enjoyment of a bountiful earthly paradise.

But Khrushchev made a great point also of his confidence in the eventual triumph of socialism over Western capitalism if the two are permitted to compete with each other unhindered by the outbreak of a new war. *Sputnik* seemed to give him an unparalleled opportunity to invoke again the "wave of the future," for he predicted that Marxian socialism would succeed capitalism much as the latter had once supplanted feudalism.

Doubtless in the first hours of apprehension over the Soviet earth satellite there were many who had their first doubts about the relative effectiveness of the ways of the Western democracies. American prestige, badly battered by world reaction to the shame of Little Rock and by blundering in the Middle East, sank to a postwar low. We have failed to make friends by propaganda; we have been too niggardly and short-sighted in foreign loans and technical aid; and now the Soviet Union appears to have stepped far out ahead of us in the vital arms race.

Could there be a more propitious moment for taking up the Khrushchev challenge to engage in competitive coexistence? (Obviously the reference here is not to the concept of coexistence whereby the U.S.S.R., unopposed, solidifies its conquests of restive subject peoples and lays foundations for further expansion.) The challenge here is in terms of material living standards and that security and

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those freedoms which make man's life here below meaningful and worthy of his best efforts.

To meet this challenge successfully is no mere matter of contrasting present living standards and civil liberties under the two systems. Although this is somewhat to the point, it has not prevailed against rosy Soviet visions of the future. It has even backfired in the vast, uncommitted colonial areas where Soviet Russia and Communist China have played up such disparities to demonstrate that the Communist way is the ideal way for other unindustrialized peoples to take the giant strides required to reach their places in the modern world.

Something much more fundamental is called for. In order to convince the world, we must re-establish our own faith in our institutions and our way of life. We must look beyond our highly developed labor-saving devices and comparatively untrammeled leisure, which are end-products, to the things that have made such accomplishments possible. If we will consider such precious rights as *habeas corpus* and freedom of worship, speech, the press, association, it may lead to a firm grasp of the fact that our democratic freedoms have developed for the protection of the inviolability of the human person. They run directly counter to the monstrous totalitarian theory that man exists for the State or for society, present or future. They comprise the political and social values embodied in our cause.

A new awareness of the treasures that we have is the first essential. Then, rededicated, we shall have to turn to the urgent practical measures here and abroad required to bring actual economic, political and social conditions closer to these ideals. It is unthinkable that, even with the greatest technical proficiency, a serfdom of the Soviet type can eventually produce a manner of living superior to that achieved by the free, if somewhat regulated, play of truly democratic institutions—unless we lose heart or heedlessly neglect to tackle with determination the practical tasks that now squarely confront the free world. And these are tasks which devolve principally upon the United States and its individual citizens.

ARTISTS AND THINKERS

MR. WILLIAM FAULKNER of Oxford, Mississippi, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1949 and without question one of the great writers of our times, has given his views on the "tragedy of Little Rock" in a recent letter to the N.Y. *Times*. He has also given a demonstration of the difference between artistic power and power of intellection.

Mr. Faulkner speaks of the "fact" that "white people and Negroes do not like and trust each other, and perhaps never can." Presumably he makes this observation on the basis of his own experience, but it is astonishing that he should elevate his conclusion to the level of a universal principle. He goes on to say that it is not important for Negroes and whites to like each other; the important thing is that we "federate together." This is where the confusion mounts. It is quite right, of course, that Negroes and whites need not "like" one another, so long as they respect one another's rights. But why the emphasis on the question of "liking" and the omission of all reference to the real question, that of rights? The Negro in the South is asking not affection but fundamental rights guaranteed him by the law and wrongfully denied him. In these terms—the denial of full citizenship to one group of Americans by another group—what does it mean to speak of "federating together," forming a "unified front"? Can one exclude and include at the same time?

As he develops his arguments, Mr. Faulkner's ideas become even more difficult to follow. He says America must be united "not for dull peace and amity but for survival." Why are peace and amity spoken of in this pejorative manner? Is peace always dull, and how so? But the sweep of the Faulkner rhetoric is not stayed.

Reiterating the call to unity and freedom (this last unexplained), Mr. Faulkner writes off all the world as lost, except America. We are "the last people unified nationally for liberty in an inimical world." The image of "fortress America," isolationism transferred to the moral order, is strong throughout the letter.

What Mr. Faulkner says is, at first, deeply depressing. It seems to damage his authority as an artist, to suggest that our respect and admiration are misplaced. But this is not so. The artist is not necessarily a thinker; indeed, many artists have felt the intellectualizing bent to be inimical to their art. The relation of thought to artistic worth is not a simple one, and one need not subscribe to the daemonic theory to admit the separateness of the two orders. What William Faulkner says about the South in a letter to the *Times*, the ideology he professes as a resident of Oxford, Mississippi, in no way lessens the weight of truth and beauty in his novels. But likewise, it may need to be said, the cogency of his political thought is in no way guaranteed by the power of his art.

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THE THING IN OUTER SPACE

LAST WEEK we commented at some length on the fact that the Russians had successfully launched their first artificial moon. Since then, news and editorials about *sputnik* have continued unabated. Judging by comments we have seen, those charged with public relations in the Eisenhower Administration must be squirming. For, whatever excuses might be offered for the errors in policy that let the Russians pass us by in the missile race, the handling of *sputnik* by Administration officials since the news first broke has been downright fantastic.

What has been the official Administration reaction to *sputnik?* Mr. Eisenhower is not unduly disturbed about the news. Mr. Wilson, who presided over the scaling down of the Defense department expenditures, is not bothered. In fact, no Cabinet officer who will allow himself to be quoted is perturbed. The only ones who are excited are the scientists, the missile experts, the leaders of other nations, the newspapers of the United States, and the people of this and every country in the world.

At his press conference the President told newsmen that he had not known in advance that the launching of the Soviet satellite was imminent. Yet it is said that intelligence reports sent to the National Security Council last March or April indicated that the Soviet could and probably would launch a space satellite in the near future. According to Marguerite Higgins, some Cabinet officers are inclined to dismiss such intelligence reports very easily, and on this occasion Mr. Eisenhower's subordinates evidently took this report so lightly that the matter was never officially called to his attention. Yet even from the narrow point of view of public relations we cannot conceive what they were thinking of. Did they imagine for one minute that people here and abroad would shrug off the launching of the *sputnik* as a matter of no consequence, while the Soviet Thing was whizzing around over their heads in outer space? If they did, they were incredibly wrong.

As a striking example, take the case of the New York *Herald Tribune*. The *Herald Tribune* is a staunchly Republican paper that was one of the first to beat the drums for Mr. Eisenhower, and ever since his election it has supported him through thick and thin—so much so that reading it sometimes gave one the impression of reading an Administration White Paper. Then came *sputnik*. On the morning of the President's press conference, the *Herald Tribune* ran an editorial called "The Lessons of Our Defeat"—not yet a bolt from the Administration but a deviation from the official line which, if it has not yet been able to claim *sputnik* as a victory, still refuses to admit a defeat. Then came the President's press conference, and his refusal to admit that anything might be wrong with America's missile program. This was apparently too much. The next day the *Herald Tribune* ran an editorial called, "While Who's Asleep?" which contained these heretical words: "What the nation expected yesterday from the President of the United States was leadership. It did not get it."

If the Herald Tribune is any sample, then *sputnik* is at least going to make Americans face the hard facts of international life. The Russians clearly have achieved supremacy in the field of missiles, and their recent claim to have perfected a thermonuclear warhead for these missiles is probably accurate. For years magazines like this one have said that budget-cutting imperiled our national security and that of the free world; for years people have dismissed such criticisms as "partisanship." But if newspapers that are normally Republican and economy-minded are now going to say the same thing, America is indebted to *sputnik* after all.

QUESTION OF IDENTITY

IN DOVER, Delaware, not long ago, two Negroes were denied service in a roadside restaurant. The orange juice they ordered was given to them in containers, wrapped, and they were told that they would have to drink it outside.

In a matter of hours news of the incident was flashed all over the country and all over the world, because one of the Negroes turned out to be Mr. K. E. Gbedemah, Finance Minister of the new Republic of Ghana. Mr. Gbedemah was understandably affronted by what had happened, and his government threatened to file a formal protest. But everything seems to have been smoothed over. Mr. Gbedemah has received personal apologies from the manager of the restaurant chain involved and from President Eisenhower. Damage to U.S. prestige throughout the world has at least been minimized and the Minister has been mollified.

We are glad of this, of course, but we keep wondering about what would have happened if the two Negroes thus humiliated had not been Mr. Gbedemah and his secretary, if they had been merely John Doe and Richard Doe. The injustice would have been identical, but can anyone imagine the rest of it the same?

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Saints, Pilgrims and Artists

J. D. Salinger deals, not with public questions, but with private character. The personality is at grips with a problem almost too strong for it. The problem is always love.

by DONALD BARR

BREAKING, sick with revulsion, a combat soldier reads a letter from his little sister, overcomes despair, and falls asleep. A boy of sixteen, flunking out of prep school, runs gently amuck in Manhattan, talks to his little sister, and ends in a sanitarium. A staff-sergeant on occupation duty in Germany, just released from a neuropsychiatric ward, is shaking in black isolation in his billet, finds a letter from a little English girl who has befriended him, and falls into a quiet sleep. A pretty college girl lunching with her date on a football weekend suddenly loses control, and after a sweating attempt to explain a religious book she has read, faints and lies ejaculating silently, "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy," over and over.

Those who regard stories as symptoms will find a whole syndrome in the works of Jerome David Salinger. He is preoccupied with collapses of nerve, with the cracking laugh of the outraged, with terrifying feelings of loneliness and alienation. He seems to correspond peculiarly to the psychological aura of our moment of history. And since he appears chiefly in a slick magazine written for the urban upper and would-be-upper middle classes, it seems easy to find in his tormented souls the insulted psyche of the "other-directed man" of Professor Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd*. A recent article in the *Nation* was hopefully titled, "J. D. Salinger: Mirror of Crisis."

But this is wrong. First, Salinger, though he served an apprenticeship in the *Saturday Evening Post* and writes for the *New Yorker*, is an artist and art is not for diagnosis—not until we are through with it as art. Once we have made it a source of data, we cannot treat it as a source of wisdom. Second, Salinger does *not* write about the Lonely Crowd, the man made in the image of B.B.D. and O., the Great American Oral Type, the consumer of love and rauwolfia. He writes about saints, pilgrims, and artists.

Salinger's career divides, with a little help, into three phases: from 1941 to 1945, when he appeared in *Collier's* and the *Saturday Evening Post*; from December, 1945 to 1951, when he published *The Catcher in the Rye* and the six classical *New Yorker* stories on which his reputation still rests; and from 1953 to now, when in the Glass family stories he has seemed to struggle with something that so far is too high, or too vague, or perhaps too definite.

Salinger's first published work was a sketch in *Story* of a girl trying too hard at a party, done in the slice-of-life fashion, its very point lying in its seeming pointlessness. It is witty and concentrated, but it was followed by stories of Army life in *Collier's* which are coy, maladroit, patriotic lies. The stories which appeared while Salinger himself was in training are different. Only thinly falsified, they show his special emphasis, the disclosure of character—not public character in its social relations or in questions of right conduct, but private character. The personality is always at grips with a problem which is almost too strong for it. The problem is always love. (By always, I mean, of course, usually. By love, I mean the willing exposure of the soul to pain, not the appetite.) They also show an ear trained to everyday speech and thought, preparing for the great bravura of *The Catcher in the Rye*.

ABOUT THE SPRING of 1944, apparently, Salinger was shipped overseas. The next stories center on a sergeant named "Babe" Gladwaller, taking him from his last furlough in the States, to a slit-trench in France, to his estranged return. They are unhappy; they have a slow turbulence, as if some inner difficulty had been brought up into the working area of Salinger's imagination. But if he no longer offered bargains in

Mr. Barr, a member of the staff at Columbia, is a well-known critic of contemporary literature.

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happiness, perhaps he was still ready to offer bargains in sadness. He seemed to have the feeling of "I, a stranger and afraid in a world I never made."

Then appeared, in 1951, the novel which was to make him famous and which is the perfect result of his discipline, *The Catcher in the Rye*. Few novels have been written throughout in so strongly marked an idiom, for that is essentially a short-story device. Yet through 75,000 words it does not pall; and for two reasons.

First, there is no insinuated laughter *at* Holden Caulfield's idiom, though it is very funny. This sort of narration is almost never intended to get an effect of ultimate dignity. Ring Lardner mixes parody with very little pathos. "Is *this* a human being?" we say. "Well, well, it takes all kinds." Nelson Algren, while he wishes us to feel the bitter pathos of freakishness, must also invite us to feel guiltily superior to it. "Is *this* a human being?" we say. "It is the tragic price of the System that supports me." But of Holden Caulfield we say, "*This* is a human being." He is troubled, lost, but in the image of God.

Second, Salinger has an ear not only for idiosyncrasies of diction and syntax, but for mental processes. Holden Caulfield's phrase is "and all"—"She looked so damn *nice,* the way she kept going around and around in her blue coat and all"—as if each experience wore a halo. His fallacy is *ab uno disce omnes*; he abstracts and generalizes wildly, and his closing words are, "It's funny. Don't ever tell anybody anything. If you do, you start missing everybody." Each experience fills the whole universe for a moment.

Let us put down some statements about Holden Caulfield. His terrible word of condemnation is "phony." He is kept celibate by compassion. ("I thought of her going in a store and buying [the dress] and nobody in the store knowing she was a prostitute and all . . . It made me feel sad as hell—I don't know why exactly.") Even his anger is a twisted compassion. (To the pimp who beats him up he cries, "You're a stupid chiseling moron, and in about two years you'll be one of those scraggy guys that come up to you on the street and ask for a dime for coffee. You'll have snot all over your dirty, filthy overcoat, and you'll be . . .") He feels the injustices done others as done to himself. What he wants to be is "the catcher in the rye," the only big person in a field of playing children, with the job of catching them, keeping them from falling off "some crazy cliff." He wakes up a schoolmate to ask, "What's the routine on joining a monastery?"

Holden Caulfield is not a finished saint, but the Beatitudes apply to him better than Professor Riesman's valuable book does.

SOME GRADUATE-STUDENT girl in flats and a grown-out Napoleon cut, schlepping her *Finnegans Wake*, loose-leaf notebook with colored tabs and *Reporter* magazine around Columbia, could do a good master's essay on the sources of the *New Yorker* tradition in the short story. She would have chapters, of course, on Chekhov and Maupassant (ordinariness, and the unresolved cadence at the end); Joyce (the story turning on an "epiphany," a moment of awareness when some incident brings the inner meaning of experiences into clarity) with a well-hedged comparison to Zen Buddhism (enlightenment coming from sudden flashes of perception rather than from thought); Henry James (compassion, sensitivity and taste making their possessors terribly vulnerable to the world); Somerset Maugham and Aldous Huxley (neutrality towards passion, and the punishment of the characters' hybris or pride by the author's observation); and the immediate founders like Benchley, Dorothy Parker, Thurber, E. B. White, Perelman (variously: unmuscular agnosticism, fullback-hating, hatred of whimsy, laughing in a relieved way at one's lack of power, the use of pregnant trivialities, admiring people who have faith as if they were gamblers who had won, and measuring oneself ruefully against the literature of competence and strength that flourished in the boyhood of the world before World War I).

It is during this last chapter that our girl would begin to have trouble with Salinger, for even when he wrote his classically *New Yorker* stories, he did not conform wholly to a certain sickish ethos which runs in the magazine's tradition, and which happens to be what Holden Caulfield's teacher describes as the "terrible, terrible fall" that awaits the merely sensitive, "where at the age of thirty, you sit in some bar hating everybody who comes in looking as if he might have played football in college."

Our graduate student could state the difference in terms of poems. For the magazine's ethos, she will, of course, turn to her well-loved *Collected Poems of T. S. Eliot*, to the overheard voices of the Waste Land, and to Prufrock, with his social obligations, his hospital metaphor to describe the world he lives in and his mermaid metaphor to describe the world he cannot live in, his "No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be." For Salinger's ethos, I would suggest the poem by Shaemas O'Sheel that begins, "They went forth to battle but they always fell," especially the lines from "It was a secret music that they heard," down to

> "Ah, they by some strange troubling doubt were stirred,
> And died for hearing what no foeman heard."

I HAVE BEEN moving by heavy hints and preparations to a theological conclusion. In Salinger's early stories, a growing sense of a man's estrangement from his world and his kind, of his being marooned on the island of himself, is attributed to the war. Babe

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Gladwaller feels that those who have not shared his experience cannot really understand his mind. In the second phase, the Veteran gives place to the Lover: Holden Caulfield loves; Seymour Glass loves; the husband of the wanton girl loves; Sergeant X loves. Some love a single object, and it is inaccessible through coldness or coarseness or circumstance. Others love the whole world, and it is busy. A few are content in their lonely benevolence; but most suffer from the feeling that they have failed at loving.

Sergeant X in his German billet finds a book left by a Nazi woman who has been interned. She has written in it: "Dear God, life is hell." He writes a quotation from Dostoyevsky underneath: "Fathers and teachers, I ponder 'What is hell?' I maintain that it is the suffering of being unable to love."

Most of Salinger's work, therefore, is about those who think they are in hell, a place where the soul suffers according to its qualities, and without escape.

Ordinarily, we all are interested in hell. Ten people have read and enjoyed the *Inferno* for every one who has read the *Purgatorio* or the *Paradiso*. It is fun; like looking at real estate, it gives us a sense of our own possibilities. But Salinger's hell is different. It is hell for the good, who can feel pain, who really love or hope to love. On the gate of this hell we do not read the words, *"Lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch'entrate."* Hope is not abandoned here—hope is the implement of torture, hope deferred. We identify ourselves both with the victims and the devils. And it is not strange real estate. It is home.

To the Christian hell is in the after-life; to the atheist it is in this life; but to both hell is eternal, because it lasts as long as the soul does. But to the Mahayana Buddhist, for example, hell is not eternal. He does not admit the three laws of thought, that whatever is, is; that no thing both is and is not; and that a thing is or is not. In his Nirvana, the soul both is and is not; it exists egolessly. It has given up living and dying. What the body is doing meanwhile, I am not sure. Nirvana may be an oblivious after-life, or a state of miraculous unconcern in the midst of this world. In any case, this—and not surprisingly, when we recall the stories in which sleep is the end of suffering—is the exit of hell which Salinger now sought.

IN JANUARY, 1953, after a year and a half of literary fame and literary silence, Salinger published in the *New Yorker* a story called "Teddy," which began his latest phase. It reads *methodically*, as if the impulse had first been to write something that was not a story. It has dialogue of a kind then new to his work but now his standard: no longer seducing our belief and lighting up characters with things we had heard but not listened to, but expounding an ordered set of ideas as plainly as can be done without actually destroying the characters into whose mouths they are put. The ideas are mostly Zen. The direct, mystical glimpsing of God behind the identities of this world is the way. An unsentimental and unpossessive love is the practical result. But the God—one feels this—is not our God, only divinity in the abstract. The love—one could not prove it—is no longer our love, only benignity.

In the stories Salinger has published since then, "Franny," "Raise High the Roofbeam, Carpenters," and "Zooey"—poignant, beautifully managed philosophic dialogues, really—the doctrine is developed sometimes in the language of Christian mysticism (after Meister Eckhart) and sometimes as a rather high-flying syncretism. This mysticism aims not at a rejection of the world, a flight from life, but an affirmative feeling for life that transforms it to the terms of its essential godhead, and gives peace. It is the triumph of Salinger's third phase that he elevates almost into a *bodhisattva*, a Buddhist saint, the young man Seymour Glass, who nine years before had been given to us as a critically wounded soul.

What is definite in doctrine and what is definite in fiction are virtually opposite. Salinger's prose has not improved as he carries his answers to these many decimal places. No longer are the trivialities pregnant; they are delivered by Caesarian. When Buddy Glass overhears a lady say, ". . . and the next morning, mind you, they took a pint of pus out of that lovely young body of hers," the incident is worked up into a regular symbol. His characterizations are less telling. The Veteran became the Lover; now the Lover has become the Perfectionist.

Salinger's kind of mystic is a spiritual perfectionist, and the members of the Glass family who carry on his recent, immensely long dialogues are artist-perfectionists as well. Their standards are their author's, just as their learning is their author's. It is not a humble attitude. For no one was ever ashamed to admit that he was a perfectionist. As a self-accusation, it has everything; it diagnoses one's neurotic ailments, wraps one in a small but fetching mantle of mystery, implies great refinement and intense suffering, and even threatens one's audience a bit. For we all can love a little, but none of us is perfect.

Yet Salinger remains one of the most powerful talents now practicing the short story. For the many who are involved in an effort like his, his struggles are more meaningful than other men's successes.

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Camus refuses to confuse what he desires with what he believes to be true

The Isolated Man

by ANTHONY BAILEY

THE FRENCH AND the Germans have in common a tradition in which literature and philosophy are closely connected, largely through men who have been practitioners in both fields; and of recent years, that French line which extends from Montaigne through Voltaire to Jean-Paul Sartre has come particularly close to German thought as it has been expressed by Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Karl Jaspers. Apart from this, though at times influencing and being influenced by it, there is in France another tradition which appears to share more with classical Mediterranean pessimism: the Pascalian tradition that returns to Augustine and that presently finds its most fluent spokesman in Albert Camus.

"Existentialism," as a label, tends to cloud the issues current here. Both Sartre and Camus are called "existentialists." Sartre indeed welcomes it, as his proper title, but has expounded his position in such a way as to cause Heidegger and Jaspers, two other so-called existentialists, to refuse to share the same name. Camus at one time was associated with Sartre, until the latter decided to make common cause with the French Communist Party after World War II; and, in one way, this act discloses the difference between the two men. Of the two, Sartre is at bottom the more optimistic; at least his optimism is founded on more active grounds. Both see man's situation as absurd. Both hold that integrity and courage are the main things man can strive for. Both abjure traditional philosophy.

It is probably Camus, however, who takes the radical individualism that is inherent in a philosophy of existence to the furthest extreme. In his writing there is none of that flirtation with "the pressure of history," the eruptions of society—those melodramatic occasions in which man can become *l'homme tout entier*—that Sartre seems to demand. In fact, in Camus' work, one discovers rather characters who are reacting against such shock, as if in outrage. Accordingly, the principles that Camus presents to his reader are harder to define. Integrity may be the dizziness of the crest before the Leap—"The real effort is to stay here," says Camus—but it is a virtue which is made clear only by example, and those examples he has given us so far make it a very cloudy thing.

"There is no sun without shadow, and it is essential to know the night," Camus wrote in *The Myth of Sisyphus*. The Night is his chief concern. It is the Night which is also the Pascalian misery of man without God: the darkness of an absurd world, made darker by man's depravity, in which the only certainty is that man is a conscious animal. *Cogito* is the one sure thing; a small illumination. Yet despite his preoccupation with reason, Camus in some ways justifies a cynicism in the English or American reader. "If Albert Camus were an American he would be Nelson Algren," someone remarked to me, and the point is comprehensible.

We do not live in post-war France. We aren't yet sure that traditional philosophy and traditional standards are as worthless as these writers assume. Certainly Christians might ask the question that Gabriel Marcel poses: By what right is Camus qualified to pass the verdict that the world is absurd? Either he does not belong to the world in question, in which case the world should be impenetrable to him; or, he is a part of the world, and if the world is absurd, so too is he. For Marcel there seems to be no point in calling the world absurd unless the world can be compared with some idea of order or rationality, to which he observes the world fails to conform. And Marcel would ask further: how did Camus come to be aware of this ideal?

THESE MAY seem to be wholly destructive questions; yet they are made by one who has already leaped. Camus would probably reply in a tone almost of agreement. Man *is* absurd. *I* too am absurd. Yet I am a conscious animal. I can think. Nor will I believe anything beyond what my reason shows me to be true. Thus man's condition is tragic to the extent to which his reason shows him what his actual condition on earth may be.

As he says of Sisyphus, (who was condemned by

Mr. Bailey, a member of the staff of the *New Yorker*, is a frequent contributor.

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the gods perpetually to roll a rock up a mountain, from whose summit, once it had been gained, the rock rolled to the valley, to be pushed up again and again), "If this myth is tragic, that is because its hero is conscious. Where would his torture be, indeed, if at every step the hope of succeeding upheld him? The workman of today works every day of his life at the same tasks, and this fate is no less absurd. But it is tragic only at the rare moments when it becomes conscious. Sisyphus, proletarian of the gods, powerless and rebellious, knows the whole extent of his wretched condition: it is what he thinks of during his descent. The lucidity that was to constitute his torture at the same time constitutes his victory."

Camus' philosophy is the articulation of a tragic view of life, one might also say an artistic view of life. It is a philosophy whose negative attributes are the most evident. But we should be able to comprehend that the sight of the horror and the suffering of the contemporary world can shock an onlooker and well lead him to a belief that it all springs from "a rooted irrationality at the very depth of things." Moreover, as Marcel insists, the position taken by Camus is in many ways admirable, both honorable and honest; that of a man who won't let himself be imposed upon; who refuses from the very depth of his being to confuse what he desires with what actually exists.

Camus first attracted attention when he was an editor of *Combat,* a resistance newspaper, during World War II. He has written plays, philosophical essays, and fiction; he has a reputation as a polemicist in the French press. In many ways there appears to have been little change in his position since *The Myth of Sisyphus* was published in 1942. Then he wrote: "All systems of morality are based on the idea that an action has consequences that legitimize or cancel it. A mind imbued with the absurd merely judges that those consequences must be considered calmly. It is ready to pay up. In other words, there may be responsible persons, but there are no guilty ones, in its opinion."

The attractions of this world are pretty slender ones. "For twenty centuries the sum total of evil has not diminished in the world. No paradise, whether divine or revolutionary, has been realized," he wrote in *The Rebel.* The only change noticeable in *The Fall,* his latest book, is that he appears to have admitted the reality of guilt, as well as of responsibility. ("God is not needed to create guilt or to punish. Our fellow men suffice, aided by ourselves.") It is difficult to say just how important that admission is; whether, in fact, it betokens an awareness of some original innocence; or whether it is a literary necessity, a word to heighten dramatically a view of man's fate. Certainly, in the last resort, Sisyphus himself was guilty. He stole the secrets of the gods; he treated them with levity.

THE EXTENT to which *The Fall* is loaded with Christian or neo-Christian symbolism reminds one chiefly of how much "existentialism" at least in French hands is a literary philosophy. It is philosophy practiced as art. It is at a far extreme from the science which philosophy has become in the hands of the linguistic analysts. Yet it is not necessarily more palatable. Camus is setting forth what is perhaps the most stark and austere chart of man's predicament in the mid-twentieth century. There is little color, or consolation, in it. Sartre, in fact, has praised what he calls a theater of situation, in which "each character will be nothing but the choice of an issue and will equal no more than the chosen issue." As Miss Iris Murdoch points out in her essay on Sartre, it is therefore easier for him to be a good dramatist than it is for him to be good novelist. To my mind, it is for Camus as it is for Sartre: both have a certain impatience with what Miss Murdoch calls "the stuff of life." Both are writing a moral and problematic literature; and, in Camus' case, it seems a legitimate criticism that, as novels, his books, *The Stranger, The Plague,* and now, *The Fall,* are decidedly lacking in those qualities which create the illusion of an extended world that can carry a moral and didactic burden.

Camus, it is true, calls these books *récits* and not *romans.* They are narratives in the sense that *Moll Flanders* is a narrative, though they lack the richness of Defoe's book. There is, however, a dryness of tone common to both authors, which makes Defoe a good illustration. In some ways *The Fall* is a modern *Robinson Crusoe,* save that the hero casts himself away on purpose. In all the books, though, man is in isolation. In *The Stranger,* the hero is a semi-moron, further separated from other men by a murder which he commits almost accidentally; in *The Plague,* the characters are essentially lonely, drawn somewhat together and made aware of their duty by the plague. Yet, though they are lonely, none of them is ever successfully rendered as a believable and individual character.

Jean-Baptiste Clamence, the "hero" of *The Fall,* has believable attributes. He has been a notable Parisian lawyer, who has given much to charity, taken cases where he would get no monetary recompense; he is vain and immoral in his private life. His sin is pride. Eventually he finds that he is not immune to judgment. Isolated by self-knowledge, he exiles himself in Amsterdam, to a shady bar where he practices the profession of penitent judge. By confessing himself to strangers he hopes to be able to pass judgment on the world. Camus prefaces this short monologue, told by Clamence to a stranger, with a paragraph from Lermontov:

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"Others shrewdly noted that the author had portrayed himself and his acquaintances. . . . A Hero Of Our Time, gentlemen, is in fact a portrait, but not of an individual; it is the aggregate of the vices of our whole generation in their fullest expression."

One is aware of the intention of *The Fall;* and, perhaps more shrewdly, one sees that the French have a way of often starting at the wrong end: they take an idea first of all and then look for illustrations, instead of beginning with characters who can manifest things as they are and as they ought to be. Clamence is this way. He may be an aggregate, but he is not an individual.

The Fall is full of fine aphorisms and is certainly witty enough. The reader is drawn unwillingly into the position of the stranger Clamence has accosted in the bar, and we have to listen to his confession. We ought to be the *"hypocrite lecteur, mon semblable, mon frère,"* of Baudelaire. We ought to judge ourselves a little too. The effect should be that which Pascal felt on reading Montaigne: "It is not in Montaigne, but in myself, that I find all that I see in him." But we do not go that far. Rather we inquire again with Pascal: "The licentious tell men of orderly lives that they stray away from nature's path, while they themselves follow it; as people in a ship think those move who are on shore. On all sides the language is similar. We must have a fixed point in order to judge. The harbor decides for those who are on the ship; but where shall we find a harbor in morality?"

IN MANY WAYS this is part and parcel of the existentialist predicament. "Ah," says Clamence, "for anyone who is alone, without God and without a master, the weight of days is dreadful. Hence one must choose a master, God being out of style." Karl Jaspers put it: "We are so exposed that we constantly find ourselves facing nothingness." Sartre tends in the direction of masters. Camus rejects them. We must carry on by ourselves, he implies, each one alone. Finally he falls back on the classical French virtues, lucidity and coherence, in an attempt to restore a code of conduct in the world after God. In the moment on the crest, the dizziness before the leap he can never take, he seems to cry, with Jacques Rivière, "Lucidité, Lucidité, Lucidité!" Our sole hope resides in our consciousness. Our nobility exists in our conscious effort to be decent men, to recognize that we are as others, guilty as all men, and honorable only in that we are aware of ourselves as such, without hope, men who must keep rolling the stone to the top of the mountain. Only, Camus suggests in his interim report, we are never quite lucid or coherent enough.

COLUMBA THE ABBOT

Gray-eyed Columba, he
Who rhymed in the Gaelic tongue
And had been king if he cared,
Heard from over the sea
(In the place where he'd been young)
That illy the Poets fared.

"Trouble is all they make!"
Complained the angry people.
"Too heavy is their hire!
For price of a song they take
The bell from the village steeple,
The cow from the farmer's byre.

"Let them be off and going!
For mischief, for their greed,
We banish them one and all."
Then Saint Columba, knowing
A bit of the minstrel breed,
Came back to Donegal.

Back from Iona's isle
He came where the Irish heather
Was welcome to his feet.

And after a little while
He called the people together
Before the High King's seat.

"Admitted," he said, "it's so
That bards are kittle-kattle
And thorns in everyone's sides.
But who, if the Poets go,
Will sing the tale of a battle
Or the beauty of your brides?

"Like grass that autumn yellows
Your fame will wither away.
Dull must a nation be
Without these meddling fellows.
It's the price you have to pay
For owning a history."

Columba lifted his rod
And Poets walked no more
Under the exile's curse—
Colum who, next to God
And the sight of Ireland's shore,
Loved a proficient verse.

PHYLLIS MCGINLEY.

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The widow of Dylan Thomas tells
of living in the shadow of a colossus

A Fierce Confession

by BETTE RICHART

IN HER FOREWORD to John Malcolm Brinnin's *Dylan Thomas in America*, Caitlin Thomas said her intention, in a promised book of her own, would be "to vindicate first Dylan, then me, then both of us together. And hope that the truth that I am trying blindly to say, to find out for myself, will come out through all the literary muddles and faultily not detached attitudes. And I hope it is a better truth than Brinnin's."

No such vindication can be found in the long-awaited book, *Leftover Life to Kill*. (Atlantic-Little, Brown. $4.50.) But her premise was as false as her promise: no such vindication was required. Where lightning strikes, it devastates as it illuminates. One does not primly weigh a phenomenon like Dylan Thomas. Nor does one dismiss him as a "fashionable poet," as Caitlin throughout their marriage wanted to do. "Their marriage," Brinnin said, "was essentially a state of rivalry. Yet they must have known themselves what was apparent to others: that victory for either party could only lead to defeat for both."

Caitlin's new book does nothing to alter that estimate. Nothing but death can quell an epic hero: not disapproval, not disaster, and certainly not mere marriage. Yet the awesome title of Caitlin's autobiography shows how little is left for her now that Dylan is no longer available in any of the several roles which were his.

Thoreau said that you can't kill time without injuring eternity; the phrase "to kill life" would never have occurred to him, as it would not to most of us. The murder of the true, the good, the beautiful is often the preoccupation of the lunatic, the lover and the poet, who were of imagination all compact long before Shakespeare remarked it. She follows her husband's counsel to rage against the dying of the light, and never for a moment seems ridiculous or pathetic while doing so. She achieves instead a primitive grandeur—a remarkable feat when one remembers that her book is a monograph against death, against reality. It is comfortless, cruel and beautiful. Her prose is almost as effective as her husband's, but it is describing Christmas in hell rather than in Wales, and the reader is not likely to forget either of them.

Certainly most of us were hoping for revelations of Dylan which no one but Caitlin is in a position to give. They are not to be found here. She is lucid as few writers have been concerning the problem of living in the shadow of a colossus; anyone is likely to leap to one of two extremes, either losing his identity altogether, or else asserting it too clamorously. Caitlin notoriously chose the latter course; she is a one-woman night on Bald Mountain, and is the first to admit it. It is difficult, then, to understand her bitterness toward Mr. Brinnin, whose book was both intimate and exhaustive. What she resented, perhaps, was not so much his book as his very existence, sensing that those who loved Dylan for his work were a threat to her private island of love. Whatever her limitations as a critic (she is still weighing her poems against Dylan's, which suggests that the limitations are serious), her flaw as a wife was typical: she could not concede that the work is the man, even if the man is not a genius, and that in loving a man's work, a woman need not relinquish her lover. Caitlin, in identifying herself with Dylan, could not identify herself with those searing fragments of revelation, his poems; she was, and will remain, a woman divided against herself.

CAITLIN'S BOOK tells the bleak story of her life since (but not with) Dylan. The simple truth was that Dylan and Caitlin were blind drunk most of their married life, but no amount of alcohol could drown the images in him, nor rust the barbs in her. They were forever competing, tormenting each other, giving, snatching back, insisting on their pound of flesh, underestimating yet adoring each other in the classic tradition of star-crossed lovers. Caitlin writes, "How Dylan would have loathed this style of abstract ranting, as he would have called it, of mine; but I should never have dared put it down if he was going to see it." This is a tragic insight into what was

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wrong with their relationship: she is a woman of unusual talent, and he recognized it. Her "abstract ranting" has been intimately influenced by his, and their sullen arts are similar. Brinnin recalled that when Dylan Thomas received his first letter from her in America, he exclaimed "She's a better poet than I am!" So their rivalry was a conscious one, and was literary as well as sexual.

Only two saints could have resolved it. In his book, Brinnin said of Thomas: "His life seemed sometimes to be the furious denial of a saintliness he could not hide." The denial, we must admit, was as effective as it was furious, and Brinnin seems closer to truth when, much later, he concludes, ". . . a living delight, a living torment, he was without any question the most lovable human being Liz had ever known. While she adored him, she knew also that he was a destroyer, that he had an instinct for drawing to him those most capable of being annihilated by him. The attentions he demanded had caused her to lose all sense of her own existence and to be attuned only to his."

It was precisely this self-annihilation that Caitlin, to do her justice, was trying to escape. Had he lived, she might have done so, but death perpetuates a quarrel as often as it immortalizes peace, and now she will relive forever their failures and their finalities.

Her account of her American leave-taking is as stark as a stage-set built of bones: "I was left mad; drunk; heartbroken; and for the first time horribly alone; in the middle of the morning; in the middle of the sea; and in the middle of Dylan and me; me and my box, down below, that I was bringing home." But Wales, when she arrived, she could not bear; Wales, "where death alone is not feared," where she was expected to dress in black and play the circumspect widow of greatness. She couldn't, of course, and fled with Colm, the youngest of the three children, to Italy, where, on a bleak island, she drank and mourned and shivered with cold, "untouchable, unclean as a leper with my little bell of pain, which tinkles so intently with the insistence of an alarm on waking."

NEVERTHELESS, she achieved there a small miracle: she fell in love with a native workman only three years older than her eldest son, and he

loved her. She explains it very comprehensibly: "I had as much Dylan as I could carry with me." Her doomed romance reminds one of Dali's haunting epigram, "Nothing is too late at the moment when it occurs." How Caitlin scorns sensual fulfillments, and yet revels in them! But despite the violence of her life, her human compassion, when it does appear, is of a purity and intensity almost mystical. Her comment upon life among wealthy Americans is an example of this, as well as an epitaph for the civilization she describes: "They sport a rustic simplicity, string the beans, rough cast the walls, sprinkle saw dust on the floors, all at vast cost, labor and inconvenience to everybody; to get, as near as money can bring them, to Christ's stable; provided that the champagne is under the straw."

There were so many of the correspondences of which love is made between Dylan and Caitlin. Why were they not enough? I think because of the randy faithlessness that branded them both. They were not unsuited, they were not cruel, they were never, despite their sexual misadventures, in love with anyone but each other. But they could not keep the faith in any sense; someone once said of Willa Cather that "she gave the impression of one who has gazed deep and long into the crystal of human fidelity." It is surely the most beautiful compliment anyone ever had, one that Caitlan might envy. But it is the last that either of the Thomases earned in their lives together.

Their love was desperate, not profound, being sustained by the love of drink and the fear of death, and stimulated by the kind of rivalry that seldom permits the taming of the shrew. How could they go gently into that good night, who enter it in a state of siege?

Mr. Brinnin's testimony and Caitlin's fierce confession supplement but certainly do not disprove each other. Dylan Thomas emerges from all the obscuring mists as a folk hero still: a poet, a lover, a drinker of lengendary stature. What a play he could make of a poet whose triumphs ended in delirium tremens! But the rest of us, incapable of the cosmic joke, must await another book before we dare to feel that we know him at all. His most devoted friend has given us a documentary; his wife has given us the autobiography of her own distortions, soberly acknowledged. Where shall we turn to discover who he was, rather than what he did? To his poems of praise, of course. To his almost last words, "I've had eighteen straight whiskies. I think that's the record. I love you, but I'm alone." And to the penitential psalms, where loneliness "beyond the comprehension of those of us who feel we live in loneliness" is explicitly named as the essential tragedy of man. The raven on the housetop drank himself to death. May he rest in peace, as his wife laments him.

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VARIETIES OF ANTI-CLERICALISM

THE OTHER DAY, out of the blue, a friend asked: "Are you anti-clerical?" The friend was himself a priest. I did not answer right away for several reasons. For one thing, I wanted to be sure of what he meant by the word. I also wanted to think about what my answer would be.

"Anti-clerical" means different things to different people. There is such a thing as clericalism. It is a political term which describes the misuse of ecclesiastical power and the meddling of clergy in secular affairs where they are not needed, not wanted and have no claim to authority. It is not an American phenomenon and is disappearing in Europe. In theory, I am opposed to this brand of clericalism; in fact, I see no evidence of it.

There is another thing called anti-clericalism which is less precise in its meaning but more pervasive. This brand is based on dislike for organized religion in general, or the Catholic Church in particular, and manifests itself in strong prejudice against the clergy. I use the word "prejudice." I mean by that a predisposition when one meets a priest, any priest, and for the simple reason that he is a priest, to react immediately with suspicion and distrust.

The people I am thinking of are prejudiced against the clergy the same way others are prejudiced against Jews. They may tell you that some of their best friends are priests, but that fact is clearly a source of great wonder and paradox to them and they think it should strike you that way, too. For they begin with the premise that a priest has to prove himself. He has to establish that he is innocent of the unpleasant characteristics their stereotype requires.

Anti-clericalism of the prejudice type is not found only among non-believers. There are also good churchgoers, faithful communicants and devout men and women who just don't cotton to priests. Either they don't like the kind of people who become priests or they don't like the kind of people priests become. But whichever the case and however much they may respect and revere priests as ghostly fathers in God, they do not like them as people. This is not a serious form of anti-clericalism. It has nothing to do with faith. But it is a prejudice.

It is found among the clergy themselves. I remember being told by a monk that if he were to look for the purely human reasons why he entered a monastery he would probably have to say that he did so because it was the only way he could find to escape from the parish clergy. Everyone has heard of bishops who do not like Jesuits, Dominicans, or some other clerical group. Well, there are some lay folk who carry the thing even further. They are prejudiced against all priests.

I do not think I am one of them.

Certain members of the clergy who talk a great deal about anti-clericalism have their own idea of what it is. These priests tend to dismiss all criticism of themselves, real, implied or imaginary, as nothing more than unreasonable prejudice. Since they think of themselves in terms borrowed from the treatise on the virtues, they can account for any dissent from that view only by attributing it to wanton bigotry.

I suppose I would have to answer that I am anti-clerical by their standards. If you pressed me, I would have to admit that some priests are knuckleheads. But this is the world's worst kept secret, so if that is what anti-clericalism consists in, the anti-clericals are a fairly large army.

It has been said that in Europe clericalism and anti-clericalism are sides of the same coin. If clericalism does exist in this country, and it is slight at most, the European formula does not fit. Among us anti-clericalism is not a response to clericalism; it is a response to what can only be clumsily called anti-laicism.

Whatever real resentment of the clergy there is among the laity is based on the layman's feeling that in the Church he is reduced not to a secondary role, which he finds completely acceptable, but to practically no role. He is never consulted; he is told what is expected of him, period. And nothing is expected of him but to pay the bills. At least some laymen resent this sort of thing; they resent it when they are not taken seriously and when their ideas, wishes, experience and values are scorned. They resent being tied to the clerical apron strings.

An eminent ecclesiastic once said that the proper position of the layman in the Church is to be reaching in his pocket to find something for the collection plate when it is passed. This was said long ago. Times have changed. But there are still places where the laity are treated as simple-minded children. There are still clerics who speak and act like the sacristy *fuehrers* of old. It does not go down well these days. With the best intentions in the world, such pastors misjudge the intelligence, training, experience and docility of their flock.

Where such attitudes still prevail a mild form of anti-clericalism does exist but, let it be remembered, as a reaction to anti-laicism. Its roots are not deep. It is easy to cure. Such a simple thing as giving parents a little more to say about the parochial schools, for instance, can work wonders.

JOHN COGLEY.

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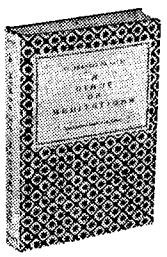
"FROM BOOKS...

the greatest meanings in life..."

A DIARY OF MEDITATION

St. Francis De Sales

Edited by **Dom Cuthbert Smith, O.S.B.**



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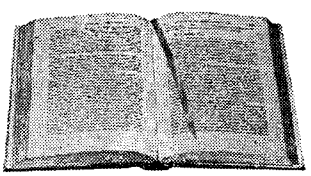

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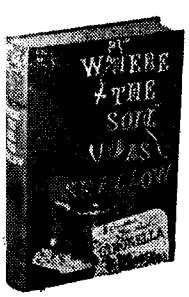

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We'll let you decide whether or not it's an understatement to call it simply a "great" crisis; but certainly it was a crisis, and we can be grateful to Father Thomas McAvoy for his judicious account of this all-but-forgotten chapter of American History. It would be impossible to relate much concerning the circumstances in so little space, but since you're entitled to know something about the book, perhaps it will suffice to say that it concerns the so-called heresy of "Americanism" that found bishops, clergy, and laymen quarrelling bitterly at the turn of the century. The Vatican finally intervened, but nevertheless, an indelible mark was left on the Church in this country.

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THE STAGE

DEAR MISS LONELYHEARTS

THE VISION of Nathanael West's "Miss Lonelyhearts" commands by its hallucinatory stillness that crawling sense, as in a Breugel pastoral, of violence, tumid and swollen, about to burst. Again, as in Breugel, there are figures at the center, but it is to the periphery, where a carnival of grotesques riot obscenely, that our gaze is fixed. They drain the center of all moral energy but disgust; they block the avenues of escape from this solipsistic cage. Nothing works: not fornication nor the sluice of liquor; neither a day in the country nor "the new Thomistic synthesis": Miss Lonelyhearts tries them all and goes home each night to his cell, bare but for the figure of Christ nailed to the wall with large spikes. There is no sound in his motionless landscape but the satanic chorus of Shrike, plucking and sucking illusions like the petals of an artichoke, until the heart of need lies exposed, quivering and repulsive. Yet naked, it hardens into the stony serenity of madness, and a rose blossoms in Miss Lonelyhearts' skull: when the killer cripple calls to him, he charges in a frenzy of acceptance, hearing that shout as "a cry for help from Desperate, Harold S., Catholic-mother, Broken Hearted, Broad-shoulders, Sick-of-it-all, Disillusioned-with-Tubercular-husband. He was running to succor them with love."

The quality of such a vision and such a burden bears no relation to tangible reality: rather its power is one of fantasy and its weapons those of a modified surrealism. Indeed, the obliteration of time and personality in "Miss Lonelyhearts"; its self-lacerating parodies of religious supplication and imagery; the savage mythicizing of negation in terms of an inverted Redemption—these have their origin in a disorder of the sentiments so corrosive as to strip human response of any gesture but the twitch of horror. Yet West never *abuses* the terrible: his descriptions of Inferno, surgical and lucid, have, as Mr. W. H. Auden remarks, the authenticity of first-hand experience.

In the nature of things, the failure of any attempt to articulate this vision dramatically must be absolute. Mr. Howard Teichmann's adaptation is gallant and honorable and committed: I intend no slur when I say it is nonetheless offensive. Mr. Teichmann has made the error of assuming that the paraphernalia of actuality has any objective existence in West's work: he fails to see that, for this novelist, incident, character, personality, ostensible satire are but the necessary rubbish of illusion, childish and pandering, a scaffold for the demonic, private and obsessive fantasies. Nor is it legitimate to retort that West's world is everywhere and intrinsically dramatic: there is a sharp demarcation between the dramatic and the *dramatically accessible*. Willa Cather observed once that what is written on the page is not created—rather, that creation lies in the echo and breath, the savor or scream in the mind. Nothing of that is heard or tasted on the stage at the Music Box, and that is why Mr. Teichmann's conscientious fidelity, the direction of Mr. Alan Schneider, the performances of Mr. Pat O'Brien and Mr. Fritz Weaver have no interest beyond that of history or gossip: at the last, the experience of which they are the realization cannot truly be said to exist. (*At the Music Box.*)

RICHARD HAYES.

THE SCREEN

PEOPLE IN GLASS HOUSES

EVERY NOW and then films come along which are not necessarily perfect, but which still deserve serious attention because their aims are high. And although the execution of such pictures often falters a bit, they still provide stimulating entertainment. This week we have two such films.

"Time Limit" tackles the knotty subject of P.O.W.'s who collaborated with the enemy. It by no means solves all the problems, but it asks the right questions very effectively. Portraying a colonel at Governor's Island, Richard Widmark gives an excellent performance as a serious, high-minded army officer whose unpleasant job it is to gather the evidence for and against a major accused of collaborating with the Reds while a P.O.W. in North Korea. Giving an equally fine performance is Richard Basehart as the accused man, who admits his treason and wants only to be hurried on to the court-martial without any further dwelling on details. Widmark knows he is handling a hot potato; all the witnesses against Basehart agree on their testimony, and, furthermore, Widmark's general (Carl Benton Reid), whose son died in this same P.O.W. camp, is anxious that the evidence add up to a speedy court-martial. Although both his secretary (Dolores Michaels) and his personal aide (Martin Balsam) are concerned for his future career in the army, Widmark refuses to slight the case or be hurried. Why, he wonders, should Basehart, a sensitive and intelligent man, a courageous and proven officer, be the one man in the camp to break?

Although the film's script, written by Henry Denker from the play which he and Ralph Berley wrote, is necessarily talky and somewhat confining as to action, Director Karl Malden uses his camera extremely well to convey the effect of motion and to heighten the

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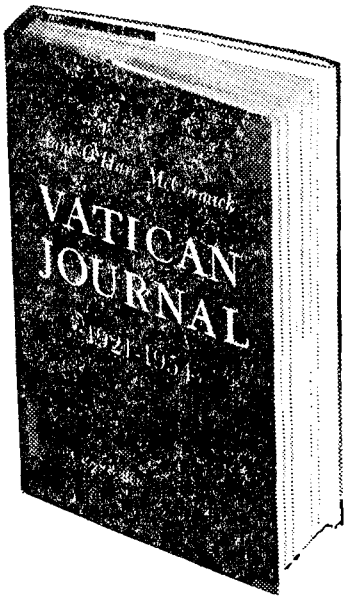
Anne O'Hare McCormick,

one of America's best-known reporters, presents an intriguing, authoritative account of Papal prestige and influence during the reigns of Benedict XV, Pius XI, and Pius XII.



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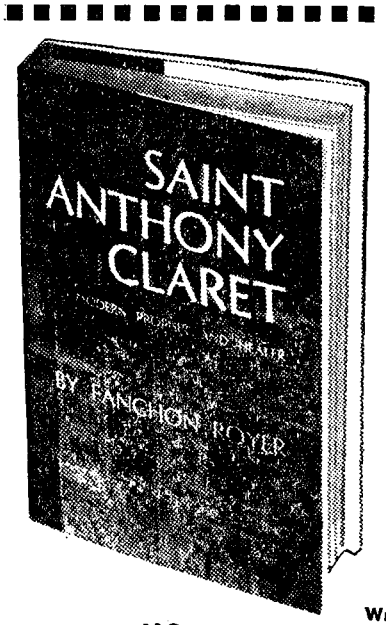

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suspense which mounts, scene by scene. Flashbacks to the P.O.W. camp in Korea add to the revealing evidence, and so do the telling performances of the leads and of the good supporting cast. Outstanding in this latter category is June Lockhart, in her single scene as Basehart's wife to whom Widmark goes for help when Basehart refuses to defend himself.

At the picture's finale there is a great deal of talk about the Army Code of behavior for P.O.W.'s and about any man's limit of endurance, even a heroic man. Although the solution to the mystery of collaboration with the enemy is presented in somewhat one-sided fashion, "Time Limit" is still a provocative and entertaining film.

ALSO PROPOSING a good many questions is "No Down Payment," probably the most crowded film ever made. It concentrates on four fairly-young married couples who live in Sunrise Hill, a new housing development in Southern California. As far as I could make out, the sun never sets on Sunrise Hill and its people live in goldfish bowls. And people who live in glass houses obviously should not live so close to neighbors nor lead such complicated lives.

Perhaps the most unusual thing about this unusual movie—other than the good though over-plotted script written by Philip Yordan from John McPartland's novel—is the cast of eight leading players, all of whom turn in top-notch performances under Martin Ritt's excellent direction. Jeffrey Hunter portrays a salesman who wants to be an electronics engineer; Patricia Owens plays the role of his attractive, overly-ambitious wife. As the newest arrivals in the community, they soon discover that all is not gold in this glittering, smug housing tract. Their most likable neighbors, played by Pat Hingle and Barbara Rush, argue about his not going to church and about Pat's Japanese employee who wants to move to Sunrise Hill. In another house, Tony Randall, as a fourflusher on the road to alcoholism, and Sheree North, as his fed-up wife, argue about their insecurity. And in still another house, Cameron Mitchell, as a frustrated, immature, professional war hero, and Joanne Woodward, as his sloppy, unhappy wife, argue because they have no sense, education, security or children (although they gave away their baby born before they were married).

What happens when these four couples, living so close together, get too chummy is not exactly pleasant to watch, but it makes for melodrama that is absorbing. If Producer Jerry Wald thought his picture showed a suburban cross-section, he was wrong. But he gave his picture a good production, even though some of the problems in its contrived story are ended only by frightening violence. Perhaps this movie was just meant to be a tract against housing developments. Annoying as it frequently is, though, especially in its pat ending, the film manages to be entertaining as it screams its little message: "Good fences make good neighbors."

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

COMMUNICATIONS

"THE PARISH PATTERN"

Los Angeles, Calif.

TO THE EDITORS: In "The Parish Pattern" the author, Fr. Furlong, writes, "A man with ideas could conceive all sorts of valuable activities and developments in his parish—if he had unlimited help and resources."

Perhaps the idea might be carried a step further. In recent years professional fund-raisers have accustomed us to accept the laity in parochial activity on a professional basis. Why not carry this to a wider acceptance, to a point where qualified lay organizers, counselors, instructors, etc., are employed on a full-time basis as part of the parish staff?

Our universities do not confine the task of teaching to priests and scholastics only. We have a large faculty. Even subjects such as philosophy and theology which were once deemed the exclusive domain of clerical professors are shared today, and the department head in some instances is not a priest-professor, but a qualified lay-professor.

A valid objection in many cases, of course, would be lack of funds. But not all parishes are fighting a big debt. In mission fields we use the lay catechist system. Our hospitals often employ professional administrators, coaches and gym instructors are employed in our schools, and I understand there has been a move in Chicago to employ trained choir directors for full-time work in parishes. We use many laymen at the national level, at N.C.W.C., for instance.

Perhaps it might be possible for the parish "faculty" to expand and include paid help, just as the parish today employs a cook, sexton, housekeeper, etc. Our typical parish societies and organizations would benefit, and perhaps become even more effective, under the competent guidance of an experienced lay organizer. That is, someone permanently employed by the parish and accepted as part of the regular parish staff.

Many activities besides fund-raising can be handled by qualified laymen. If classes in theology and philosophy can be turned over to lay professors in our colleges and universities, might it not be possible to turn over to parish inquiry classes, the required instructions for a mixed marriage, etc.?

(*Rev.*) JOHN E. ODOU, S.J.
Loyola University.

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Calm, Wise Stories of the Human Comedy

DOMESTIC RELATIONS. By Frank O'Connor. Knopf. $3.50.

By WILLIAM JAMES SMITH

MOST OF THE stories in this latest collection of Frank O'Connor's appeared originally in the *New Yorker,* where they served to confound those who criticize that magazine's fiction as a monolithic agglomeration of memoirs of dull and surly childhoods ("*Maman* and I used to visit Aunt Christobel at Baden-Baden every summer . . ."). Mr. O'Connor, to be sure, is fond of recalling his own childhood, but he does it with enough verve and enough sense of "story" to make it palatable. In many ways Mr. O'Connor is a natural *New Yorker* writer. He is urbane and witty and he instinctively avoids those shrill and harsh notes that—well, that wouldn't go in a humorous magazine is probably the most honest way of putting it.

Mr. O'Connor is so urbane, come to think of it, that one is hard put to explain why he is so splendid an artist. One is inclined to be a little suspicious of so much charm. And perhaps Mr. O'Connor does at times let his charm carry him a little further than his other talents would take him. But we cannot justly quarrel with what he chooses to use as a paddle so long as it gets him where he's going. All possible strictures aside, he remains a superlative story-teller.

The reasons for his excellence are most discreetly inconspicuous in his work. His stories are as unassuming and as effortless as across-the-bar or over-the-back-fence gossip. He admits to aiming consciously for this effect—of avoiding the "literary," the line that does not read aloud naturally and conversationally. This effort has resulted in a superbly clean and lean style, with none of the "poetic" passages, sentimental moralizing and melancholy posturing so dear to some Irish writers.

His stories move. When you grab hold of the first sentence you know you're going somewhere. It picks up and starts off with you. O'Connor is truly a writer "hard to put down." This is partly because of the easy simplicity of his style, but largely because Mr. O'Connor magically makes you want to know why it is Shelia Hennessey married a man twenty years older than herself and whether the marriage worked out all right. He is interested in people and in their motives. And although he does not analyze their behavior in any depth, what he does say of them rings true.

Consider "The Ugly Duckling." The story is simplicity itself. Tom-

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boyish Nan Ryan finds consolation for her lack of physical attractiveness in adolescent religious fervor. She matures into a startling beauty and is courted by a number of suitors but rejects them all finally to enter a convent. Mr. O'Connor does not even comment upon the religious implications of her decision. " . . . what had happened to her," he says, "was not something unique or inexplicable. It was something that happened to others in different ways. Because of some inadequacy in themselves—poverty or physical weakness in men, poverty or ugliness in women— those with the gift of creation built for themselves a rich interior world; and when the inadequacy disappeared and the real world was spread before them with all its wealth and beauty, they could not give their whole heart to it. Uncertain of their choice, they wavered between goals — were lonely in crowds, dissatisfied amid noise and laughter, unhappy even with those they loved best. The interior world called them back, and for some it was a case of having to return there or die."

Or take the comic story entitled "A Salesman's Romance." Charlie Ford, the inveterate salesman, gets himself and his girl friend into a preposterous fracas of an automobile accident and a law suit. Charlie wins the case and loses the girl, but his salesman's instincts come to his rescue and Charlie reconstructs the incident into a fine little salesman's story: "Did I ever tell you how I won the case and lost the girl?" And then O'Connor goes on to add one of his own magical little fillips: "Suddenly Charlie was himself again. Art had triumphed over Nature. It was the old story—'Out of my great sorrows I make little songs.' " The effect of the ancient poetic catch-line, ironically delivered, is to raise the story into something appreciably more than the comic anecdote it has quite effectively been up until that point.

This capacity of O'Connor's of stepping up the voltage, as it were, of his stories is probably the secret of his surest claim to greatness as a teller of tales. He is not a writer with those "levels of meaning" dear to English departments, but there is more to him than meets the eye. He is, in effect, a searcher out of essences. The story comes first and, though he does not manipulate his characters, he is not afraid of having a point and stating it explicitly.

In a quotation on the jacket of this book O'Connor makes some rather dubious off-the-cuff remarks about his work and his dislike of "unified" stories *à la* Joyce. It is, rather, because his stories are unified that they are so good, however unlike Joyce's stories they may be in other ways. O'Connor's stories may give the impression of moving along under their own power, and they are certainly never forced, but however light the artist's hand may be it is there, shaping the material into a meaningful whole, and the artist's brain is at work interpreting this meaning. The effect is a triumph of artful simplicity, but artful it is.

Of course Mr. O'Connor has his limitations, as does any writer. He works in the middle ground of "domestic relations," where tragedy and ecstasy never really impinge except perhaps in comic disguise. But this leaves him nothing less than the bulk of life to work with. When Mr. O'Connor's hero doesn't marry the girl of his heart's desire he very sensibly marries someone else, and if he does any pining it is in his spare time. Mr. O'Connor has nothing to say about star-crossed lovers or obsessed madmen or violence of any sort (though compare his early and superb story "In the Train" for a suggestion that he might have this capacity). Yet he manages to say a number of calmly wise things about the human comedy.

Novel About a Juvenile Novelist

ANGEL. By Elizabeth Taylor. Viking. $3.50

By ALICE SAXON

THE EARLIER a reader catches the tone of this book, the sooner he may start enjoying it. He may well bumble about at first while the delicate humor seeps unhurriedly out of the seams of a disarmingly familiar literary setting. Angel Deverell appears as a gaunt, brooding schoolgirl, plagued by limited horizons and the dullness of her mother and her aunt, who innocently plot her future as a lady's maid while taking their tea in the flat over the grocery. It is learned that Angel writes compositions fraught with fine writing, efforts that are received suspiciously by her teachers, and that she regales two young charges with tales of her own hypothetical grandeur. Immediately she suffers a classic experience, one that catapults her into her career: her little friends betray her fabrications to their mother, who in turn makes life miserable for Angel's mother, while Angel, spurning humiliation, decides then and there to quit school and become a full-time novelist.

Plucky, imaginative and misunderstood; one moves quite naturally to her side, prepared to assume her point of view and enter sympathetically into her subsequent trials. Only a certain flatness and mulishness of disposition come steadily into prominence. There is no getting around it: her mother and her aunt are quite kind; Angel is quite nasty; what is going on? The reader is at last informed that the girl, who is now playing sick in bed so that she can indulge unmolested in full-time novel-writing, is utterly lacking in affection for anyone, is uninterested in human experience of the real variety, and, most significantly, has not even a trace in all her being of a sense of humor. What is being set forth is strictly speaking not a novel but a "character," brilliantly explicated through every stage of her career; and the reader must abruptly abandon identity with Angel and take up with the author, from which vantage point he will be, if not moved, at least quite thoroughly amused.

Sixteen-year-old Angelica Deverell is a fearless and fearful novelist. She writes audaciously and pre-

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posterously, pouring forth her tireless delusions and quaintly ridiculous notions of life and self. Whether one has decided to cheer for her or not, the second time out the contents of her packet are greeted with hilarity and a royalty check from a London publisher. "The Lady Irania," drawn and quartered with savage joy by the critics, but lapped up by the general public, is a sensational success.

What follows is a lark, and had best be read. It is no small feat to construct the entire life of such a person, with each episode a vehicle for the display of her peccadillos, and at the same time keep one's material constantly intriguing. The humor is characterized, of course, by soft sneaky little thuds of understatement dropped in the best British manner; nothing is pressed; the right word in precisely the right place does it. Among the brightest moments: Angel, the successful authoress, parading at a party in a corsage of amethysts and a gown appliqued with rapidly wilting orchids; Angel returning from a trip abroad with an economical gift for her most devoted friend—a bottle of water from Delphi (imbibed by herself at the last minute and refilled with tap water); Angel established at her country estate with a pair of newly purchased peacocks moping to death on the terrace, and furious neighbors complaining of her pestering the sick with her bedside visits bearing copies of her novels and jars of bad preserves. It should be noted that the other characters—her beautiful, effete husband whom she covets and acquires in much the same way as the peacocks (and with the same fatal result) and his sister who becomes her companion-slave-housekeeper, her kindly publisher, her kindly mother, her dog and her cats—all justify their presence delightfully.

While acknowledging Miss Taylor's art, however, one reviewer has questioned the general justification of a book about Angelica Deverell. Evidently conceived as a prototype of the lady novelist who flourished in the early part of the century, Angel is, in addition, a remarkable specimen of a mystifying type encountered at least once in every lifetime—people incredibly disconnected from reality, ensconced rigidly in their own fancies, and yet, thriving unmolested. They tend to arouse in those around them a kind of solicitude, based, no doubt, on a finicky reluctance to cause or even witness anything so messy as the shattering of such accumulated illusions. Angel is such a one, and Miss Taylor charts her course shrewdly.

Furthermore, Angel is an artist (a very bad one) and her career necessarily has some bearing on the subject of the creative personality. Angel is not without certain essentials; she has the instinct to create effusively where need and disappointment inflict, and her reserve of fancy is bottomless. But she is lacking ludicrously in humor, irony, a sense of proportion and a capacity for self-evaluation. The nature of her literary productions are worth noting: she skims the clichés off

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the surface of life with complete naivete, feeding people, of course, their own private absurdities, their indestructible images of dukes, duchesses, foreign counts, castles and moonlit terraces. "There were dungeons and crypts and family vaults in her stories," notes Miss Taylor, "but not cemeteries; the only poor were penniless beggars; and the seaside always was abroad." If bogged down at the dinner table scene of an Edwardian novel, Angel removed it, groggy guests and all, to ancient Greece, which was, of course, "a sunlit world of dazzling marble and diaphanous draperies . . . with slaves pouring out wine, bearing in great baskets of figs, and playing lutes." (Her editors are kept hopping to tone down her most glaring anachronisms and evidences of pristine ignorance.)

This is not to say that *Angel* is written in a spirit of criticism. Angel's deficiencies and their consequences are obvious enough. And yet, however elementary the point, the fluctuations of mood make it provoking, involving as they do caricature, pathos, and an introduction that is warm and particular with Angel's youthful indignation. How many novelists, after all, have not their roots in some small dissatisfied person who learned to look greedily on a horde of sharp pencils and the smooth clean pages of a new notebook as the certain means through all barricades, to a self-designed world with almost comical powers to delight.

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By JAMES FINN

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Readers who approach M. Mauriac for the first time through the recent, and excellent, translations of Gerard Hopkins may have some difficulty in understanding the furor which attended their first publication, the heightened criticism and praise which was once the author's regular fare. For M. Mauriac, whose literary "position" may not yet be settled, is so established an author that he is readily ignored, and temporarily overshadowed, by the new novelists, who are also, supposedly, more daring. He is a winner of the Nobel Prize and is happily accepted by readers and critics whose counterparts once eagerly pilloried him. Time and M. Mauriac's fame thus act, unfortunately, as a buffer between his early novels and the reader.

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conspicuously, the grave, unlikable failings of the middle-class. The Lagaves and the Gornacs are not born to love, despise or hate; they are less committed one to another than they are to their land, to the forests and vines. Both Maria Lagave and Jean Gornac, her employer, agree that two boys—and no more—are essential to a family, one to look after the estate, the other to be employed by the State.

These standards and goals remain unchallenged until Maria's grandson is born. Robert Lagave enters his closely bound society as a "representative of the hostile race," those who experience the pangs and pleasures of love. Very early he recognizes his body as the only god he knows. As early as his eighteenth birthday, he is conscious of his passing youth and youthful charm; each additional birthday brings sadness. Before his twenty-third birthday, however, his ephemeral charm has won him the admiring attention of a fashionable, corrupt circle of friends.

The lines of young Lagave's life cross those of many people. He arouses jealousy in those who lack his knowledge of love; dismay and repulsion in a fiancée who suddenly encounters a revelation of his corrupt life; love, and subsequent loneliness, in an older woman who had remained lethargically unaware of either; and disapproval and confusion in the minds of others.

With his customary astonishing economy Mauriac creates scenes of great intensity. The heavy summer heat presses upon the countryside. No leaf stirs; no voice breaks the silence. And upon the hot, cracked ground the lovers lie together, while those whose love is unreturned ache with loneliness. Others, concerned only with the land, remain unaware of and uninterested in the eruptions of human passion. Their lives move with the rhythm of the seasons, and are fulfilled in devotion to the land.

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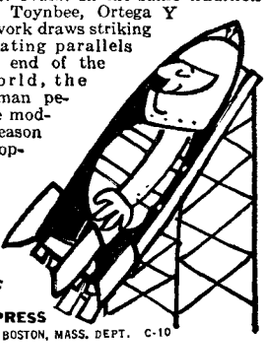

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own." Because Mauriac has attempted to show these people in all their wounded nature, because he has attempted to reflect a world where evil is palpable yet mysterious —and because he has done both so successfully—he has been severely criticized. Mauriac himself has given an answer to those charges. He acknowledges that a presence broods over the action of his early novels, that evil is a reality and many of the characters corrupt or broken. But his characters, asserts, M. Mauriac, have souls. They acknowledge the eternal consequences of their actions. And he has not been tempted to the pleasant falsehoods so many readers expect to find in works by a Catholic author.

Some readers may find M. Mauriac's self-accounting unsatisfactory, however subtle and sincere. Others will accept his apologies as brilliant introspections of a true artist, but as gratuitous offerings. For these early novels are true works of art which now surpass and will surely survive their justification.

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By THOMAS F. CURLEY

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Street of Riches is the fourth of Miss Gabrielle Roy's books, and the first that I have read. The first thing that struck me was the apparent aimlessness of her method—it was as if she had merely remi-

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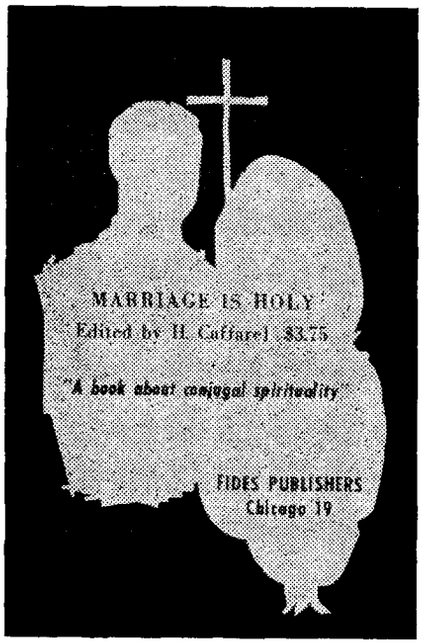

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nisced. The next thing, far more accurate than the first, was the openness of her sensibility—her imagination and memory seem to meet and converse without inhibition. The third impression corrected the first, for at the end of the book one realizes that Miss Roy is an artist of clear purpose and of exact and delicate expression.

The second chapter (or second story, since *Street of Riches* defies the common categories) begins: "Shortly after I came into the world, my father, because I was of frail health or because he himself—then old and sick—had too great a pity for life, dubbed me 'Petite Misere' —'Little Miss Misery.'"

"Too great a pity for life." One does not forget such a phrase or a character so described. It is almost a hundred pages later that this phrase is filled out in the chapter, "The Well of Dunrea." And in the next to the last chapter, "By Day and by Night," the narrator, Petite Misere, tells of her father's death. He was a man of the night, one who understood suffering but not joy and who paced the house when everyone else was abed with "the tread of a man too actively engaged in his mind, perhaps launched upon one of those illusions which make men take themselves off into the desert."

"My father died at the hour that was most cruel for him, when the sun rises over the earth."

Given the same subject, many other writers would devote five hundred pages to Petite Misere's father. Miss Roy is at once more complex and more economical, for she counters the father's death with a concluding chapter on Petite Misere's entry into the world as a country school teacher. That chapter ends on a prairie in a school house while a gale piles snow in drifts outside. "Was not all the world a child. Were we not at the day's morning?"

That is very good. There is something wise and naive about it. No man could have written this book and yet its femininity is never cute or shrill. Miss Roy has fashioned a skillful subtlety of style without losing that "immediate dependence of language upon nature," which, as

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ON THE LINE, By Harvey Swados. Atlantic—Little, Brown. $3.75.

By ANTHONY J. De FILIPPS

IT SEEMS TO be a long time since anyone wrote about the working man. Perhaps time has staled or the labor union's success has dimmed the romantic appeal of the former underdog; perhaps the great American dream of riches with integrity and an uninhibited sex life sells better. At any rate there has been a spate of the *Executive Suite* novels and I presume the flood will continue.

This is all the more reason for discovering Harvey Swados. With the publication of this work he establishes what he has suggested: he has intelligence, compassion, and economy. Moreover he shows an even greater control over his medium; little extraneous matter ever slips by his disciplined pen.

On the Line is a group of short stories related in setting and, in some cases, character. The stories explain each other but are separate and may be read as such. What is the theme? Nine men come to an automobile factory and find jobs on the assembly line. Each comes as a suppliant to a god: "give me what I ask and I won't bother you anymore" is the prayer. Each man is answered in his special way and, as always in the uneasy relationship of interested man and disinterested god, it is man who merely proposes while the imperious god destroys without rancor and rewards without partiality. The advice then is "Don't press your luck; get what you want and move out fast."

The book is, then, a series of stories about the men who have come to the factory, what each hopes to get and what he actually receives. The stories range from the fatalistic story of LeRoy, who works to make money to pay for his singing lessons and who is destroyed

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by a real *deus ex machina,* to Frank who comes in his old age to find an unexpected security. In between these are the men who escape to a kind of freedom real or not; men who capitulate to complete slavery and men who try to compromise. In short, this is a perfect cross-section of any factory and large office.

Of all the stories "Joe, the Vanishing American" is most typical of Swados. It is by no means the most successful story, but it is most certainly the one which is the touchstone of Swados's philosophy. The "Joe" of the title is not really a character at all; he stands aloof from the group, acts a chorus to instruct Walter, a young boy trying to work his way through engineering school. It is he who so trenchantly sums up the whole disastrous muddle which has man at the mercy of machines whose original purpose was to be man's servant. It is he, moreover, who tries to teach the boy that freedom and free-choice are good things which we are selling for a specious security. "Damn it, doesn't anybody go out and do what he wants to anymore?" he cries.

It is interesting to compare this book with similar books written in the thirties when it was fashionable to blame the outside forces that caused the breakdown in the ideal order. Swados has few illusions about people and he knows full well that, in the final analysis, a man is trapped because he lets himself get trapped. "They make the machines and they make their own tragedies." And, when he is leaving, Joe says to the boy, "Forget about machines. Remember the men."

REVIEWERS

William James Smith, an editor of *Atomic Industrial Forum,* is a frequent critic of literature.

Alice Saxon has previously contributed stories and reviews to The Commonweal.

James Finn is an associate editor of The Commonweal.

Thomas F. Curley, a novelist living in New York, is a regular contributor.

Anthony J. De Filipps is a recent addition to the staff of reviewers.

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